

## **Guidelines for External Reviews of Academic Departments and Programs**

This document contains information for departments and programs conducting external reviews, including:

1. Guidelines for external reviews
2. Communication template from the Provost and Dean of the Faculty's Office to reviewers
3. Sample schedule for the site visit

### **Guidelines**

#### **Purpose**

The primary purpose of regularly scheduled external reviews is to understand, evaluate, and improve the educational quality of the College's academic departments and programs. At the department and program level, the goals of periodic external reviews are to provide regular opportunities for information gathering, reflection, and evaluation of the educational effectiveness, thoroughness, and currency of the College's educational programs.

#### **Selection of External Reviewers and Dates**

After being notified of an upcoming review, the Department or Program will submit a set of potential dates available for the review and an initial list of names and contact information of *at least eight* potential reviewers to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty Office for consideration as External Reviewers. The Provost and Dean of the Faculty, or his or her designee, will select three Reviewers using the list as guidance, and likely in consultation with the department chair or program director, but may select Reviewers of his or her own choosing. One of the External Reviewers will be invited to serve as the Chair of the External Review Committee.

Two of the three External Reviewers should come from liberal arts institutions similar to Whitman, and where appropriate, one from a research university to which Whitman students are likely to apply for graduate study. In their submission of a list of potential reviewers to the Provost's Office, departments and programs may find it helpful to include specialty areas of potential reviewers, as well as a list of any substantive areas that would be important to include among the areas represented by the reviewers.

External Reviewers will be contacted well in advance of their visit to campus. They will be compensated for their work after their report is received by the Provost and Dean of the Faculty's Office, and will be reimbursed for travel, lodging, and food expenses.

#### **Role of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty's Office**

The Provost and Dean of the Faculty's Office will invite and make the initial contacts with the External Reviewers. The Office is also available to assist the Department Review Chair in coordinating logistical arrangements for the External Reviewers including travel, accommodations, and site visit logistics.

The Provost and Dean of the Faculty's Office will add a narrative about Whitman College to the department or program self-study, and will duplicate and mail/email the completed departmental and program self-study materials.

During the year before an external review, department chairs and program directors of programs undergoing review in the next academic year will be contacted and asked to submit potential dates and reviewer names to the Provost's Office. Invitation letters are then sent via email to prospective reviewers.

After the reviewers have committed, subsequent email correspondence will include the charge to the reviewers (including instructions for their report), a list and contact information of the other reviewers on the team, logistical instructions, requests for accessibility or dietary needs, paperwork for the reviewers' stipend, travel and lodging arrangement information, review materials, and the site-visit schedule.

### **Departmental/Program Review Chair**

When a Department or Program is selected to undergo an external review, its members will select a tenured (when possible) member of the Department or Program faculty to serve as the Department/Program Review Chair. The Review Chair is most often the Department Chair or Program Director.

The Departmental/Program Review Chair will be responsible for overseeing and coordinating the review process. The Review Chair will supervise the preparation of materials for the review process and his or her responsibilities will include:

Ensuring that all materials for the Departmental Self-Study are properly assembled and submitted by the due dates specified by the Provost and Dean of the Faculty Office.

Ensuring that all department members are involved in the conceptualization and preparation of the Department Self-Study.

Consulting with the Director of Institutional Research to arrange for the administration of an Alumni Survey.

Coordinating and hosting the External Reviewers' site visit, including securing a working room for the external review team in the academic building where the bulk of the participating faculty and staff are located, picking up reviewers at the airport and arranging for transportation between the hotel and campus.

Ensuring that the Departmental Response to the Review Report is submitted the Provost and Dean of the Faculty's Office on time (see below).

## **Timeline**

The following approximate timeline may help chairs and directors plan for how the external review fits into other work during the year:

Academic Year before visit: Departments and programs undergoing review in the next academic year are notified by the Provost and Dean of the Faculty Office

Six months before visit: Dates are chosen, names/contact information of potential reviewers are submitted to the Provost's Office

Three - Five months before visit: Reviewers are confirmed and travel logistics are handled by the Provost's Office

Four months before visit: Alumni Survey questions are drafted in consultation with the Director of Institutional Research

Two months before visit: Department completes and submits Self-Study, including response to Alumni Survey results, to the Provost's Office

Six weeks before visit: Provost's Office formats and sends materials

Two weeks before visit: Review Chair makes appropriate campus room reservations and submits visit schedule to Provost's Office; Provost's Office sends schedule to reviewers

Site Visit: Review Chair or designee arranges reviewers' transportation between hotel and campus, and works with the Provost's office to ensure all arrangements are satisfactory and accessible

One month after site visit: Reviewers' report is due to Provost and Dean of the Faculty

Two months after report receipt: Review Chair submits department/program response (2-5 pages)

## **Departmental Self-Study and Supporting Materials**

Each program undergoing review completes a self-study that provides the Reviewers information about the program being reviewed. The primary focus of the self-study should be less about *description* and more about *analysis, appraisal, and assessment*. The Review Chair is responsible for coordinating the Departmental Self-Study and for gathering the supporting materials. These completed and compiled items should be submitted to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty's Office approximately two months before the site visit. The Provost and Dean of the Faculty's Office will add general information about Whitman College to the self-study, and will duplicate and mail/email the finished reports to the External Reviewers. The Self-Study materials include the following sections, and can be arranged in any order:

**Goals**

What are the learning goals of the Department or Program (e.g., “Students will be able to demonstrate proficiency in scientific written communication”)? (These can be pasted from the department or program’s annual assessment report. Whenever possible, state goals in terms of what students will be able to do as a result of their participation in the department or program.) How do those goals contribute to the mission of Whitman College? Are there other goals of the program that are not direct student learning goals (e.g., “Faculty members aim to increase external grant applications”)?

**Assessment and Planning**

What evidence does the Department or Program have that it is meeting its learning (or other) goals? If applicable, what benchmarks are used to assess whether goals are being met? Where in the curriculum are the goals incorporated? What improvements, if any, would the Department or Program like to see in terms of meeting its goals?

How well prepared are majors for graduate study? What do alumni report about their success or difficulty in their graduate studies? What are some common career paths taken by recent graduates? (the responses to these questions may be included here or in the Alumni Survey section of the Self-Study)

How do the Department or Program’s assessment activities inform subsequent curricular and budgetary considerations? What changes have been made to the Department or Program over the past several years based on these assessments? What evidence is there that these changes have improved the educational program? These items may be based on recent annual assessment reports.

**Governance**

Describe how the Department or Program is governed. How are administrative, advising, and other responsibilities allocated among individual faculty members? How are department or program decisions made? How often do the Department or Program faculty members meet, and what is the purpose and tenor of these meetings?

**Curriculum**

Describe the requirements and organization of the Department or Program’s major and minor requirements. This can be pasted from the most recent Course Catalog. What is the rationale for this organization?

List the ways in which students are evaluated throughout their major or minor course of study.

Describe the format, timeline, and procedures relating to the Senior Assessment in Major. How does the senior assessment help students integrate the information, concepts, and skills that they have learned? How does it allow students to demonstrate the depth and breadth of their knowledge of the field?

Are any courses in the curriculum team-taught and/or cross-listed with other departments or programs? Assess those relationships.

### **Staffing**

Describe the staffing of courses in the Department or Program. To what extent are the teaching faculty (including any non-tenure track faculty) free to teach the courses they wish? Are they able to teach them in the ways they wish? How are course schedules determined within the Department or Program?

What substantive areas are covered within the teaching and research expertise of the faculty? Include a rationale for the inclusion of these substantive areas as a means to providing appropriate courses for students.

To what extent does the Department or Program make use of non-tenure track faculty? What is the primary role of these faculty members in the Department or Program? How are untenured faculty, in particular, mentored with respect to their teaching, scholarship/art /performance, and service? Are adjunct and/or visiting faculty generally satisfied with this role?

### **Teaching**

In what ways does the Department or Program promote excellence in teaching? Describe what the Department or Program does in regards to the development of its faculty members' teaching effectiveness.

### **Professional Activity**

Describe faculty scholarly/artistic interests and aims. How does the faculty's professional activity advance the Department or Program's learning goals?

What are the Department or Program's expectations for faculty research/artistic creation/performance in terms of quality and quantity? How are these expectations communicated to Department or Program faculty? Here you may paste or include a link to the department or program's Guidelines for Professional Activity.

### **Students**

What opportunities exist for faculty/student collaboration in research, scholarship, and/or performance? What are the expected and desired outcomes for students and faculty from such collaboration? Does the Department or Program encourage activities such as internships, off-campus study, or community-based learning? If so, how are these integrated into the curriculum?

Do the students in the major or minor programs in the Department or Program reflect the diversity of the College as a whole? Are there ways to attract and retain a more diverse student population in the department or program?

**Support**

Are there adequate support staff and physical facilities (e.g., technology, library resources, laboratory equipment) for the department or program to realize its teaching goals?

How have new technologies affected the curriculum or the ways in which courses are taught? Are there new technologies or other innovations that the Department or Program would like to incorporate into existing or future courses?

**Connections on Campus**

Compile a list of other departments in which the Department majors must take courses, or departments for which the Department provides prerequisites, and a description of the interrelationships.

Discuss the Department/Program's contributions to Interdisciplinary Studies and Individually Planned majors.

Discuss the Department/Program's contribution to General Studies, including Encounters.

**Enrollment**

Include enrollment information for all courses taught in the past four years including details about the teaching loads for each member of the Department/Program with courses listed for each department member for the past four years. Also include number of graduating seniors in the major for the last four years.

**Questions for the Reviewers**

The Department or Program may, if they wish, include questions or specific issues they would like the reviewers to address.

**Alumni Survey**

Include a summary statement describing and commenting on the results of the Department or Program's Alumni Survey, including the types or topics of questions asked of alums. Departments may wish to include the raw data, but should remove identifying or contact information for respondents.

**Curriculum Vitae**

Include curriculum vitae of each member of the department including all temporary or part-time faculty members, as well as staff, if relevant.

**Course Syllabi**

Include course syllabi for all courses taught within the past four years. If a course is repeated multiple times with little change by the same faculty member, include only the most recent version of the syllabus.

**Department/Program Budget**

Include department/program budgets for the past four years, including any endowments or other relevant funds. These can be requested from the Provost and Dean of the Faculty Office.

***Format for Submission of the Self-Study to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty Office***

*Because the Self-Study is compiled by the Provost and Dean of Faculty Office after electronic submission by the Review Chair, whenever possible, documents should be submitted as Word files without page numbers. Exceptions to this can include the last four items listed above: a copy of survey results, CVs, syllabi, and scanned images of budgets, which are usually pdf files, and which can be sent as separate files.*

**External Review Visit**

The site visit will provide the External Reviewers the opportunity to meet with all department faculty, individually and as a group; tour facilities; meet with the Provost and Dean of the Faculty, Division Chair, any faculty members who the program deems relevant, the Review Chair, and students; and examine the Department or Program's self-study materials. Time will be built into the schedule for other interviews they may request and for their own discussion and writing. When creating a site visit schedule, it is important to allow breaks for the reviewers in between back-to-back meetings. It is also important to give colleagues enough lead time to confirm their availability for meeting with the reviewers.

Because the purpose of the review is to evaluate and comment upon curricular and programmatic elements, External Reviewers will not visit individual classes.

**External Reviewers' Report**

Within four weeks of the campus visit, the Chair of the External Review team will submit a written evaluative report to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty. The report should clearly and forthrightly comment on the quality of undergraduate education and provide an evaluative perspective of the program. The report should focus on the program as a whole and refrain from making judgments about individual faculty members.

The report should address, but not be limited to, the following items:

The range, depth, balance, and currency of the Department/Program's curricular offerings compared to departments in similar colleges and to the current state of the discipline.

The adequacy of instructional resources for teaching and research in the Department/Program.

The interdependency of the department or program with other departments in which majors must take courses, or departments for which the department or program provides prerequisites.

Ways in which the department can continue to serve the College as a whole, including interdisciplinary studies and General Education, including Encounters.

Changes the Department/Program could make in order to improve the quality of its program on a short (1-2 year) time-line.

Changes that the Department/Program could make in order to improve the quality of its program on a long (8 year) time-line.

Effectiveness of the Department/Program's Assessment and Planning activities.

Responses to the questions posed by the Department/Program being reviewed.

*The report should reflect the collective judgment of the External Reviewers. However, if a consensus opinion is not possible, the report should present the individual members' judgments with justifications.*

**Post Review Procedure:**

Following the External Review, several procedures will be followed to ensure that information from the review is used effectively by both the Department or Program and the College:

1. After the External Reviewers' Report is received by the Provost and Dean of the Faculty's Office, honoraria are sent to the Reviewers.
2. The Provost and Dean of the Faculty, along with the Committee of Division Chairs, reviews the Reviewers' Report and sends it to the Department/Program for consideration and response.
3. The Department/Program will have eight weeks to send to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty a 2-5 page written response to the External Reviews' Report that provides the Department or Program's reaction to the report and describes short term and long-term goals and a time-line for the changes it plans to implement. This response will be shared with the Committee of Division Chairs.
4. Departments/Programs will be expected to discuss the progress they have made dealing with the External Review Report in their annual assessment reports.

## Templates of External Communications Sent by Provost's Office

### Letter to potential External Review Chair:

Dear Dr. [last name],

On behalf of Whitman College and Provost and Dean of the Faculty Timothy Kaufman-Osborn, I am writing to invite you to serve as chairperson of a three-person evaluation team who will conduct an external review of Whitman College's xxx program, on [dates]. The College has embarked on a program of external reviews of all its academic and administrative departments, and welcomes your contribution to that process.

I would appreciate it if you would respond to this invitation as soon as possible (preferably before [date]) to indicate whether you will participate in the review. If you accept the invitation, Susan Bennett, Senior Academic Assistant in the Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty, will help make your travel arrangements to and from Walla Walla. You may contact Susan at [bennetsk@whitman.edu](mailto:bennetsk@whitman.edu) or 509-527-5399.

The team will arrive in Walla Walla on Wednesday, [date]; they will spend Thursday and Friday ([dates]) on campus; they will have dinner with members of the xxx department during the visit; they will have an introductory meeting and final debriefing with the Provost and Dean of the Faculty; they will have time to work alone as a team; and finally, they will depart Walla Walla on Saturday, [date]. Specifics of the visit beyond this, including the schedule to meet with department members and other interested parties, will be set up before the visit.

Additionally, about one month before the visit, the College will send you materials from the xxx program, including, among other things, items such as a departmental self-study, the results of an alumni survey of the program, curricular information, and guiding questions for the review. Other materials will be available upon request.

The College will reimburse you for all visit-related expenses and will pay you a stipend of \$1,500 after receipt of the evaluation team's report.

Thank you for your assistance in helping Whitman College maintain the excellence of its academic program. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Susan Bennett. I have attached a version of this invitation on letterhead for your records.

**Letter to potential External Review Team Members:**

Dear Dr. [name],

On behalf of Whitman College and Provost and Dean of the Faculty Timothy Kaufman-Osborn, I am writing to invite you to serve on a three-person evaluation team to conduct an external review of Whitman College's xxx program, on [dates]. The College has embarked on a program of external reviews of all its academic and administrative departments, and welcomes your contribution to that process.

I would appreciate it if you would respond to this invitation as soon as possible (preferably before [date]) to indicate whether you will participate in the review. If you accept the invitation, Susan Bennett, Senior Academic Assistant in the Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty, will help make your travel arrangements to and from Walla Walla. You may contact Susan at [bennetsk@whitman.edu](mailto:bennetsk@whitman.edu) or 509-527-5399.

The team will arrive in Walla Walla on Wednesday, [date]; they will spend Thursday and Friday ([dates]) on campus; they will have dinner with members of the xxx department during the visit; they will have an introductory meeting and final debriefing with the Provost and Dean of the Faculty; they will have time to work alone as a team; and finally, they will depart Walla Walla on Saturday, [date]. Specifics of the visit beyond this, including the schedule to meet with department members and other interested parties, will be set up before the visit.

Additionally, about one month before the visit, the College will send you materials from the xxx program, including, among other things, items such as a departmental self-study, the results of an alumni survey of the program, curricular information, and guiding questions for the review. Other materials will be available upon request.

The College will reimburse you for all visit-related expenses and will pay you a stipend of \$1,000 after receipt of the evaluation team's report.

Thank you for your assistance in helping Whitman College maintain the excellence of its academic program. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Susan Bennett. I have attached a copy of this invitation on letterhead for your records.

**Letter sent to Review Team Members after acceptance (with Department Chair/Program Director cc'd):**

Dear Drs. [names],

On behalf of the Whitman College Provost and Dean of the Faculty office, and the Department of xxx (Chair [name] cc'd here), I want to thank you again for your willingness to participate in the upcoming xxx external review, scheduled for [dates]. If you have not already done so, please contact Susan Bennett, Senior Academic Assistant in the Provost and Dean of the Faculty Office ([bennetsk@whitman.edu](mailto:bennetsk@whitman.edu) or 509-527-5399), regarding your travel arrangements. The members of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty Office facilitate the external review process to ensure that the department's and reviewers' work is based on information that is well-organized, high quality, and useful to reviewers and to us.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the other reviewers serving on your team:

[delete name of addressee]

Reviewer #1 Name (Review Chair), College/University

Reviewer #2 Name, College/University

Reviewer #3 Name, College/University

I have one request for you: could each of you please send an updated copy of, or online link to, your CV, which will be made available to the Provost and to the faculty members in our xxx Department? You may wish to "reply all" so that each of you can be introduced professionally, too. Of course, you now have each others' email addresses, so please feel free to communicate amongst yourselves.

Attached please find documents that we hope you will find easy to understand, helpful, and informative: a booklet with information about the review process and the department's self-study, a set of faculty CVs, a set of course syllabi, budgets, and results from a recent xxx alumni survey. If you would like us to mail you a hard copy of any of these, just ask. In addition, you may find it helpful to access the link to our College Catalog and other relevant course of study documents here: <http://www.whitman.edu/content/catalog>. This link is also referenced in the self-study document on page [#]. Details for the written evaluative report for this review are found on page [#] of the self-study.

You will be sent a detailed schedule for your visit closer to your arrival, but tentatively you can count on a flexible Wednesday evening (where perhaps you three may want to have dinner together to introduce yourselves), complimentary breakfast at the Marcus Whitman Hotel on Thursday, an introductory meeting with Provost and Dean of the Faculty Tim Kaufman-Osborn at 9 a.m. on Thursday, an introduction to the workroom that will be available for your visit (with keys), several meetings and tours throughout the day on Thursday with faculty, staff, and students, a dinner with faculty Thursday evening, more meetings and tours on Friday, and

an exit conversation with the Provost at 3 p.m. on Friday. Friday evening is your time to work with each other on the review document itself. You may want to mark your calendars for the due date for the review document: [date]. Instructions for this are also included in the attached self-study document on pages [#s].

If you need any further information in the next few weeks that we have not provided, or if you have any special dietary, travel, mobility, or other needs, do not hesitate to ask. We know you will be working hard during your visit, but we would like to make it as easy as possible. To that end, if there are other documents or pieces of information that you may want before or during your visit, please let us know.

We participate in external reviews in order to seek ways to maintain our high quality programs, and to improve upon them. Thank you for your willingness to help us in this process. Let us know if you have questions. Soon your visit schedule will be finalized and sent, and contact phone numbers are included below if you need anything during your stay. We look forward to your visit to Walla Walla.

## Sample Schedule for External Reviewers' Visit to Campus

### Wednesday

- Afternoon Arrival of external reviewer team
- Early Evening Dinner for external reviewers to get acquainted

### Thursday

- 9:00 a.m. Meeting with Provost and Dean of the Faculty to receive charge and discuss institutional context.
- 10:00-11:00 Meeting with Review Chair
- 11:00-11:45 Meeting with Division Chair, perhaps with tour of Division/Department facilities.
- 11:45-1:00 Lunch with students.
- Afternoon Tour of campus and/or meetings with faculty and staff members.
- Evening Dinner with faculty members of program being reviewed

### Friday

- 8:00 a.m. Reviewers have breakfast as a group.
- 9:30-12:00 Follow-up meetings with faculty members, staff, or administrators as necessary.
- 12:00 Lunch with faculty or just Committee
- 1:00-3:00 Additional meetings or work time (allow plenty of breaks)
- 3:00-4:00 Debriefing session with Provost and Dean of the Faculty
- Evening Committee meets to work on report

### Saturday

- Morning Reviewers depart (Written report due within one month.)